

"Coincidence or Conspiracy"—Excerpts

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"Coincidence or Conspiracy", compiled by Michael Ewing, and authored by The Committee to Investigate Assassinations under the direction of Bernard Fensterwald, Jr., is an extremely interesting, important, and worthwhile book. It is published by Zebra Books, Kensington Publishing Corp., 521 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017. Year, 1977; number of pages, 392; price, \$2.50. Here we present the beginning of the book, a launching for anyone interested in its contents. Copyright ©1977 by The Committee to Investigate Assassinations. We gratefully acknowledge permission to reprint.

"People and the PURSUIT of Truth" considers that this book is essential for all diligent students of the assassinations and those who WANT TO KNOW.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to those politicians who have taken the lead in persuading Congress to reopen the Kennedy killing.

The first is Senator Richard S. Schweiker of Pennsylvania, a courageous member of Senator Church's Senate Committee to Study Intelligence Activities. Despite massive skepticism and great odds, Senator Schweiker insisted that the Committee take at least a preliminary look at possible Cuban involvement in the Dallas murder as well as the role of the CIA and the FBI in a cover-up.

The second is Representative Thomas Downing, a veteran Democrat from Newport News, Virginia. Once he became interested in the case, Tom Downing used all of his great energy and his spotless record of integrity to see that the House of Representatives began a serious re-study of the JFK murder. He rounded up more than a hundred co-sponsors of the resolution and shepherded it through the powerful Rules Committee and the whole House. He worked a minor miracle when he achieved a vote of 280 to 65 in favor of the resolution.

Our amateur Committee to Investigate Assassinations pledged all possible assistance to the official Select Committee. Through their efforts, the American people, albeit belatedly, may learn the details of the fate of their martyred leader.

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Preface

For most Americans, and for many people around the globe, the events of November 22, 1963, remain vivid and horrifying. Yet, there are some young people today who are vitally interested in those events but who were either unborn then or too young to have personal recall. And, after all, more than thirteen years have passed, dimming all of our memories somewhat.

On that traumatic fall day, President John F. Kennedy was ending an arduous political tour of Texas. While he was riding through Dealey Plaza in downtown Dallas, several shots rang out. The President was struck first by a non-fatal shot which transected his neck and then by another shot which exploded his head. Texas Governor John Connally, who was sitting on a jump-seat immediately in front of the President, was hit by a single bullet which went through his rib cage and wrist and lodged in his thigh.

Both Kennedy and Connally were rushed to nearby Parkland Hospital. For all intents and purposes, the President was dead on arrival; but Governor Connally was saved and is alive and well in Texas today. Vice-President Lyndon Johnson, who was in another car in the parade, was sworn in as President about two hours after the shooting.

Less than an hour after the assassination, a Dallas police officer, J.D. Tippit, was shot and killed on a back street several miles from Dealey Plaza. The facts surrounding his death were disputed at the time and remain confused to this day. There were conflicting reports as to whether he was killed by one person or two and the description of that person or persons. In any event, a few minutes after this second shooting, a young man was arrested in a nearby theater and charged with Tippit's murder. This man was subsequently charged with the assassination of the President. He was, of course, Lee Harvey Oswald, a twenty-four-year-old ex-Marine.

Oswald had grown up in New Orleans and had joined the Marines at age seventeen. He was a radar operator in the very highly classified U-2 program in the Far East and California. After an early discharge in 1959, he "defected" to the USSR for two and one-half years, marrying a young Russian woman named Marina before his return to the United States in June of 1962. Upon his return he lived in Dallas and New Orleans, working at odd jobs. He is alleged to have taken a trip to Mexico shortly before the assassination.

After his arrest, Oswald was held for almost 48 hours in the Dallas Police Station. He was questioned

intensively for eleven of these hours by Dallas Police and the FBI, but it is claimed that no tape, transcript, or comprehensive notes of the interrogation were made. He was represented by no lawyer. While he was being transferred to the County Jail, he was fatally shot by Jack Ruby while an enormous television audience watched in horror. The shooting took place in the basement of the Dallas jail, within feet of scores of Dallas Police, FBI agents, etc.

The real Jack Ruby and his motive remain clouded in mystery to this day. After one abortive trial and on the eve of the second, Jack Ruby died in jail without "talking." Even the cause of his death is the subject of considerable doubt. Recently, it has been disclosed that Ruby was an FBI informant and had ties to the Mafia and probably to the CIA; many of the facts surrounding these "connections" were hidden from the President's Commission which investigated the murders.

Chief Justice Earl Warren was reluctantly persuaded by President Lyndon Johnson to head this seven-man investigating group. Other members were Gerald Ford, then Minority Leader of the House of Representatives; Rep. Hale Boggs, who later disappeared in an airplane somewhere off Alaska; Senators Richard Russell and John Cooper; Allen Dulles, former Director of Central Intelligence; and John McCloy, a banker and ex-intelligence officer. The Commission studied the assassination from December, 1963, until September, 1964, when they issued a lengthy report, followed shortly thereafter by 26 volumes of Hearings and Evidence.

The Warren Commission concluded that Oswald was a "lone-nut killer," who acted on his own and without the assistance of anyone. They concluded that there was no conspiracy, domestic or international. They could assign no clear motive to Oswald's action. As to Ruby, they accepted his statement that he killed Oswald to prevent the necessity of having Mrs. Kennedy return to Texas for a trial of Oswald. To fit the facts to their conclusions, the Commission adopted the much disputed "single bullet" or "magic bullet" thesis. In briefest outline this central thesis is as follows:

It was known that all the shooting took place in approximately six seconds. The alleged murder weapon, an ancient Italian Carcano, was a single shot and could be loaded, aimed and fired a maximum of three times in six seconds. One shot hit the curb, so all of the damage to the President's neck and head and to the Governor's ribs, wrist and leg would have, of necessity, have meant a second gunman, i.e., a conspiracy. Thus, goes the theory, one of the three bullets missed the target, one exploded the President's head, and a single bullet did all of the damage to both men. Even more remarkable, although breaking several bones, the bullet came out pristine, as though it had hit nothing.

Almost immediately after the issuance of the Report, a spate of books and articles appeared which disputed the Commission's basic conclusions. Many of the more responsible ones, including Sylvia Meagher's "Accessories After the Fact" and Josiah Thompson's "Six Seconds in Dallas," clearly demonstrated the physical impossibility of the "single bullet" theory and the improbability of many of the other basic conclusions and remarked upon the almost endless number of strange "connections" and leads which were ignored by the Commission ... in a seeming desire to make the facts fit their conclusions.

In the 1967-69 period, New Orleans's District Attorney Jim Garrison attempted to "solve" the case

through the prosecution of David Ferrie and Clay Shaw. His efforts ended in a debacle, but recent revelations of several House and Senate investigating Committees have shown that many of his basic beliefs were nowhere near as "crazy" as most people had once believed. In fact, he appears to have been on the right track (Cubans, CIA and Mafia) before he derailed.

More recently, there have been a number of further reviews of the Warren Commission's conclusion. There was a complete whitewash of them in 1974, conducted by the so-called Rockefeller Commission, under the tutelage of David Belin, formerly counsel to the Warren Commission. Representative Don Edwards of California held hearings on the FBI's destruction of crucial evidence in the case. The Senate Intelligence Committee, chaired by Senator Frank Church, conducted an investigation of the CIA-Mafia plots against the Castro brothers and concluded that all of the facts surrounding the plots were wrongfully withheld from the Warren Commission. A sub-committee of the Church Committee, consisting of Senators Richard Schweiker and Gary Hart, conducted a preliminary survey into the questioning of CIA-FBI cooperation (or lack thereof) with the Warren Commission, and they concluded that many leads were not followed and much information was withheld.

One of the major problems confronting investigators of the JFK murder is the unavailability of crucial documentary evidence. President Johnson began the process of hiding the evidence when he signed an executive order in 1963 which provided that all of the Warren Commission's materials would be classified until the year 2039 if agencies such as the FBI and CIA desired. This is bad enough in itself, but the situation is much worse than the public (and most government officials) realize. In the case of the CIA, only a fraction of their total records found their way to the Commission in the first place. Taking the CIA assassination files as a whole, there is no doubt that after thirteen years the vast majority remain classified in whole or in part. In a Freedom of Information lawsuit brought by the Committee to Investigate Assassinations for production of those records, it was revealed that the "Oswald 201 File" alone contained 1194 documents. These documents ranged in length from one page to hundreds of pages. Of the 1194 documents, only 66 were made public in their entirety. And after two years, only this one file has ever been reviewed and indexed despite pressure from Judge John Sirica's court. Harold Weisberg, the dean of the critics, has made a concerted effort to get at the FBI's records and with similar results. The stonewalling continues in 1977 unabated. Only a Congressional Committee with subpoena power — and guts and persistence — will ever see all of the files, and then, in all likelihood, only after a lengthy court battle over "executive privilege."

What follows in this book is not a rehash of the shortcomings of the Warren Commission with respect to the physical evidence in the case. We do not discuss the ballistics and medical evidence. We do not demolish the "single bullet theory" for the one hundred and first time. We believe that responsible critics have done this in spades over the past several years.

After an in-depth study of these matters of physical evidence for a decade, we have concluded that the Warren Commission was simply wrong in its basic conclusion that Oswald was a "lone-nut killer." It is our firm conviction that there had to be at least two riflemen, hence some sort of conspiracy. And the

latest Gallup poll shows that more than 80% of the American people agree with us. What we are interested in is who shot John F. Kennedy and why.

We do not pass judgment on why the Commission reached the wrong result. We do know, of course, that much information was withheld from them by government agencies which did their investigating, especially the FBI and CIA.

In an effort to get a step nearer to the who and why, what we do concentrate on is the almost endless series of "coincidences" which have cropped up in the past thirteen years and which seem to defy credulity if one insists upon clinging to the "no conspiracy" theory of the Warren Commission. Strung end to end, we believe that they spell conspiracy with a capital C.

Although the members of the Committee to Investigate Assassinations, mostly professional people joined in a non-profit corporation, have done considerable original investigation and research, we do not wish to leave the impression that most of the material in this book is original. Some was found buried in the Warren Commission's 26 volumes of evidence. However, a large part of it is attributable to the sizeable corps of dedicated critics who have worked on this case since 1963. In each case we hope that we have given credit where credit is due. If we have failed here or there, we apologize to our friends.

Chapter 1: Principals

While the resignation of Richard M. Nixon from the Presidency in August, 1974, brought a swift conclusion to the seemingly endless hemorrhage of revelations about the broad range of Watergate crimes and related corruption, the years 1975 and 1976 saw the continued disclosure of other areas of governmental wrongdoing and conspiracy; disclosures only partially muted by the public numbness in the aftermath of Watergate.

With the Senate and House Intelligence Committee probes during the past two years, the FBI, CIA, and other intelligence agencies have replaced Richard Nixon and his men as the prime targets of continuing investigation by several diverse bodies, including the Congress, press, and courts.

With the steady stream of disclosures relating to circumstances surrounding the Kennedy assassination, new areas of information have come to light on each of the key principals in the case.

The Senate Intelligence Committee's extensive accounting of the CIA-Mafia assassination conspiracy against Fidel Castro in the early 1960's, uncovered a broad range of new information pertaining to President Kennedy: his strong efforts to undermine the Castro regime in 1961 and 1962; his subsequent secret communications with the Castro government, aimed at detente, in 1963; Attorney General Robert Kennedy's discovery of the CIA-Mafia assassination conspiracies against Castro in May, 1962. These areas will be covered in depth in later chapters.

During this same period, 1975 and 1976, new information — indeed ominous information — also surfaced regarding the young Texan accused of assassinating President Kennedy, as well as the man who in turn murdered him two days later.

As will be seen later, one of the most startling disclosures of 1975 revealed that Lee Oswald had delivered a secret note to the Dallas FBI Office during the days immediately preceding the assassination — a secret note that was flushed down the toilet by FBI agent James Hosty several hours after Oswald was shot to death in the basement of the Dallas City Jail by Jack Ruby. The incident had been covered up for eleven years by senior officials of the FBI. While there have been reports that the secret Oswald note contained a threat against the FBI (for allegedly harassing him), its actual subject or contents have never been determined despite lengthy investigations aimed at doing just that.

The Senate Intelligence Committee's Final Report on the Kennedy Assassination noted that after Oswald's secret FBI note was first disclosed in 1975, the Bureau at first claimed to have no knowledge of it:

The Bureau's initial file review failed to develop any information indicating that Oswald had ever visited the FBI field office in Dallas or that he had left a note. /1/

The Senate committee went on to report that as controversy over the episode grew, the FBI finally was able to come up with an accounting of this document — an accounting which unfortunately contained some important gaps:

FBI interviews with Personnel assigned to the Dallas field office in 1963 established that:

- 1) Lee Harvey Oswald did visit the office some two or three weeks prior to the assassination;
- 2) Oswald asked to see [Special Agent] James Hosty, and upon being informed that he was not in, left a note for Hosty; and
- 3) the note was destroyed after the assassination.

The evidence developed by the Bureau contained sharp conflicts. The investigators failed to establish:

- 1) whether the note was threatening in nature; and
- 2) at whose instructions the note was destroyed. /2/

It was also in 1975 that new information came to national attention concerning the relationship between Jack Ruby and the FBI. The new information came to light in a Warren Commission document which had been withheld from the public since 1964. The new document, consisting of a letter from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to J. Lee Rankin, Commission General Counsel, disclosed that the Dallas FBI Office had "contacted [Jack Ruby] on eight occasions" for possible service as an FBI informant. /3/

The previously secret document (which some members of the Commission staff claim they had been unaware of), indicated that several of those occasions on which the Dallas FBI "contacted" Ruby had been around the same period in 1959 when Ruby was visiting a close friend in Havana, Cuba — a friend whom the Warren Commission noted was associated with the Mafia's casinos there. /4/ J. Edgar Hoover's February 27, 1964 letter to the Commission also stated that "Ruby was never paid any money" by the

Dallas FBI, and also was never officially a Bureau informant. /5/ However, as defenders of the Warren Commission conclusions have even pointed out, this repeated Ruby-FBI contact clearly indicates something other than just a random relationship. Interestingly, the actual FBI "302" interview reports on the Ruby-FBI meetings have not been released and there is no clear indication that they were ever furnished to the Warren Commission. /6/

In late 1976, even more surprising information about Oswald came to light through previously classified documents secured under the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

On October 1, 1976, after years of recurring speculation and allegations concerning such a possibility, the Associated Press disclosed:

Contrary to sworn testimony, the CIA once considered using accused Presidential assassin Lee Harvey Oswald as a source of intelligence information about the Soviet Union, according to a newly released CIA document.

In sworn testimony before the Warren Commission, former CIA Director Richard Helms said the Agency never had "or even contemplated" any contacts with Oswald.

The newly released document, written by an unidentified CIA officer three days after President John F. Kennedy was killed in Dallas, on November 22, 1963, says that "we showed intelligence interest" in Oswald and "discussed ... the laying on of interviews."

The unidentified officer added that, "I do not know what action developed thereafter." /7/

The article further states:

When he appeared before the Warren Commission in May of 1964, Helms, then head of the agency's clandestine services, testified under oath that "there's no material in the Central Intelligence Agency, either in the record or in the mind of any of the individuals that there was any contact had or even contemplated with Oswald." /8/

The November 25, 1963 CIA memorandum (Document No. 435-173A) contained other details about the possible use of Lee Oswald for intelligence purposes, and states that this possible CIA contact with Oswald had originally been discussed "sometime in Summer, 1960." /9/ The memo further states that the CIA officer who originally proposed using Oswald couldn't remember whether the idea "was discussed while Oswald and his family were en route to our country [from the Soviet Union] or if it was after their arrival." /10/

This previously secret report notes that one of the reasons the Agency considered using Lee Oswald was that they "were particularly interested in the information Oswald might provide" on industrial activities in Russia as well as "[biographic information] that might help develop foreign personality dossiers." /11/ The CIA official who first discussed the Agency's potential use of Oswald, ended his memorandum by stating:

I was phasing into my next cover assignment [deletion] at the time. Thus, I would have left our country shortly after Oswald's arrival. I do know what action developed thereafter. /12/

Several months before this previously-classified CIA information had been made public, the Senate Intelligence Committee disclosed other CIA interest that may have also led the agency to Lee Oswald in 1963. In their Final Report of June 23, 1976, the Committee states:

The CIA also took an interest in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee with which Oswald was associated. According to [an] FBI document, on September 16, 1963, the CIA advised the FBI that the "agency is giving some consideration to countering the activities of [the FPCC] in foreign countries." /13/

The September, 1963, FBI document cited by the Senate Committee went on to state that the "CIA is also giving some thought to planting deceptive information which might embarrass the [Fair Play for Cuba] Committee in areas where it does have some support." /14/ Interestingly, as Senate investigators have pointed out, Fair Play for Cuba Committee member Lee Harvey Oswald made what the Warren Commission itself regarded as a highly mysterious visit to Mexico City during the last week of that very month, September, 1963. /15/

In November, 1975, then CIA Director William Colby stated "We had no contact with Mr. Oswald ... No contact with him before he went to the Soviet Union. No contact with him after he returned from the Soviet Union. No contact with him while he was in the Soviet Union." /16/ While no solid proof that the CIA was actually somehow involved with Lee Harvey Oswald has yet emerged, few observers would now regard such a prospect as remotely as they would have in 1963.

In November, 1975, CBS News correspondent Dan Rather questioned former CIA executive Victor Marchetti about the CIA's possible contact with Lee Oswald. Marchetti, a former Executive Assistant to the Deputy Director of the CIA, is the author of what has come to be regarded as the most authoritative book on the intelligence establishment. Their dialogue provided an illustration of just how far the realm of educated speculation has advanced in the Kennedy case; few in Washington have ever sought to denigrate the credentials or integrity of Marchetti.

Rather: John McCone, then the CIA Director, swore to the Warren Commission that the Agency had never communicated with Oswald in any way, directly or indirectly. Do you think this eliminates the possibility that the Agency debriefed Oswald on his return from the Soviet Union, or that he was in some other way connected or contacted with the CIA?

Marchetti: I think John McCone should know better than to ever make such a blanket statement with regard to the CIA, after having been director of that Agency. I would think he would want to add to that, "to my knowledge." They could very well have dealt with him [Oswald] without McCone ever being informed. I think the CIA knows more about the circumstances surrounding the Kennedy assassination that has not yet been made public about their relationships with Oswald, and that the agency has covered up. I am going on the assumption that the CIA had nothing to do with the Kennedy assassination. I cannot believe, to this day, that the CIA, as an

institution, the people running the CIA that I knew, would have been party to any sort of a crime of this sort: murdering a President of the United States. This doesn't mean that there may not have been individuals, either acting on their own, or — who were only remotely connected with the Agency in some capability as a contract agent, or formerly a contract agent, who may have been involved. /17/

President John F. Kennedy

"I wish I weren't going to Texas," remarked President Kennedy to Press Secretary Pierre Salinger a few hours before he left on his fatal visit to Dallas in late November of 1963. /18/ President Kennedy dreaded making the lengthy political trip to Texas. His mission, in part, was to stem a raging feud between Governor John B. Connally, Senator Ralph Yarborough, and Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson.

Kennedy in fact was warned to cancel his trip to Dallas — the bastion of heated right-wing politics — by several close associates, including Senators J.W. Fulbright, Hubert Humphrey, Wayne Morse, and U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson, as well as Evelyn Lincoln, his personal secretary. All feared the possibility of some violent act against the President, presumably by extremist right-wing elements that had grown increasingly virulent in that city.

While various people expressed fear for the safety of the young President, the prospect of assassination was one with which Kennedy had long been acquainted. Kenneth O'Donnell, President Kennedy's White House Chief of Staff and Appointments Secretary, remembers that Kennedy "often talked about how easy it would be for somebody to shoot at him with a rifle from a high building." /19/

With thirteen years of steadily growing public doubt about who murdered President Kennedy now at its high point — with the investigative functions of the House and Senate now committed to re-opening the case — a review of the issues, conflicts, and forces at work during the brief Kennedy Presidency of two years and ten months becomes a necessary step in determining the motive and means of its brutal and mysterious end.

"The only thing that surprised us when we got into office, was that things were just as bad as we had been saying they were," is how President Kennedy described the national state of affairs to a friend in the press after taking office.

While the tumultuous thirteen years following his death have produced a massive amount of writings on the history of the Kennedy Administration, there are many aspects of President Kennedy's brief tenure in office that have attracted little attention until recently, as revelations of internecine battles within the Federal Government — including crimes, conspiracies, and cover-ups, and mysterious relationships such as the CIA-Mafia "partnership" — have finally come to the surface.

With the painful exposure of some of these darker sides of the post-war American government, new light is being shed on the image of President Kennedy and his administration. Coming to the surface is a portrait of a President increasingly fearful of the ways and means of the American intelligence establishment, in particular the CIA; a President striving, often in vain, to reassert Constitutional authority over

the already self-propelling clandestine operations of the military and CIA; a President and his brother, the Attorney General, seeking to harness the full investigatory resources of the Federal bureaucracy against the alarming penetration of organized crime into virtually every segment of American society; and finally, the discovery by the same President and Attorney General of a highly secret (and highly active) assassination apparatus within the government, being run by a mysterious amalgamation of organized crime leaders, CIA officials, and equally anti-Kennedy Cuban-exile operatives. And, perhaps also, the same President beginning increasingly to voice some degree of speculation (always in private, of course) as to the possibility of some of these same forces conspiring to take illegal action against himself, possible through some kind of overthrow or assassination.

While Kennedy's fondness for spy novels is well known, his appreciation of the delicacy and occasional brutality of the political process in this country was even more prescient. As might be expected, the devastating Bay of Pigs fiasco (coordinated by the CIA, the Agency's Cuban-exile operatives, and, unbeknownst to Kennedy, the Mafia) clearly seems to have played a large part in Kennedy's eventual strong mistrust of the military and intelligence establishments. The President would later use the Bay of Pigs crisis as an analogy in discussing the idea of a President being removed from office through an overthrow or other illegal means. The President's remarks were made in a private conversation with his long-time close friend (and Undersecretary of the Navy) Paul B. Fay. Fay reports the Kennedy discussed "the possibility" of such a takeover "very calmly" and in some detail, stating:

It's possible. It could happen in this country, but the conditions would have to be just right. If, for example, the country had a young President, and he had a Bay of Pigs, there would be a certain uneasiness. Maybe the military would do a little criticizing behind his back, but this would be written off as the usual military dissatisfaction with civilian control. Then if there were another Bay of Pigs ... the military would almost feel that it was their patriotic obligation to stand ready to preserve the integrity of the nation, and only God knows just what segment of democracy they would be defending if they overthrew the elected establishment. /20/

Paul Fay reports that Kennedy deeply resented the CIA's assumption that the President would finally agree to launch an attack of American armed forces against Cuba, during the Bay of Pigs invasion, to salvage the remnants of the CIA's disastrous Cuban exile invasion force. Fay reports that Kennedy said, "We're not going to plunge into an irresponsible action just because a fanatical fringe in this country puts so-called national pride above national reason." /21/

With the Bay of Pigs having long figured as a possible motive behind the JFK killing by various Warren Commission critics, a review of that event is relevant. Ever since the assassination, various investigators have theorized that either pro-Castro Cubans or anti-Castro exiles were involved in the assassination, a theory that was only narrowly investigated by the Warren Commission, the CIA, and the FBI, according to the Senate Intelligence Committee Report of June 1975.

Beyond the disastrously coordinated CIA logistics during the Bay of Pigs invasion, President Kennedy privately placed the next largest amount of blame on some of the Cuban exiles themselves, and particularly on some of their leaders. Former Kennedy aide Pierre Salinger has written of the inability of the CIA and the Agency's Cuban-exile operatives to maintain the necessary security for the operation:

The volatile leaders of the Cuban Revolutionary Council in exile — the political arm of the brigade — were just as heedless of security. Only nine days before the landing, the Council's President, Dr. Jose Miro Cardona, told the press in Miami that an uprising against Castro was "imminent."

JFK was livid. He said to me in his office a week before the invasion: "I can't believe what I'm reading! Castro doesn't need agents over here. All he has to do is read our papers. It's all laid out for him." /12/

Kenneth O'Donnell, Kennedy's White House chief of staff, recalls Kennedy stating, "Everybody in Miami knew exactly when those poor fellows were going to hit the beaches, but the only people in Cuba who knew about it were the ones who were working in Castro's office." /23/ O'Donnell has further recalled Kennedy grimly remarking shortly before the invasion, "If we decided now to call the whole thing off, I don't know if we could go down there and take the guns away from them." /24/

At the time, Kennedy had no way of knowing how close he was to the truth. A year after the assassination, reporter Haynes Johnson disclosed that some of the CIA officials and Cuban exiles involved in the invasion had indeed made secret plans to "countermand" any decision to call it off. In his lengthy book, "The Bay of Pigs," reporter Johnson, now of the "Washington Post," disclosed that some of the CIA field coordinators had instructed their Cuban exile man to stage a "spontaneous" mutiny at their training grounds and go ahead and launch the invasion on their own if Kennedy cancelled their orders. /25/ According to Johnson, these same CIA officials had further instructed their Cuban exile teams to seize and jail them (the CIA field coordinators) at the training camps in order to make the proposed "spontaneous" mutiny look believable. /26/

While various CIA, Cuban exile community, and Pentagon sources would later try to place most of the blame for the disastrous invasion on President Kennedy (with the CIA's Bay of Pigs coordinator E. Howard Hunt being the most vociferous in trying to establish Kennedy's "guilt"), the official investigation into the failure of the invasion placed the blame squarely on the doorstep of the CIA and the military. Theodore Sorensen, former Special Counsel to President Kennedy, noted:

The proximate cause of their [the Cuban exile forces] defeat, according to the full-scale investigation later conducted under the chairmanship of Gen. Maxwell Taylor was a shortage of ammunition, and the reasons for the shortage illustrate all the shortcomings of the operation. /27/

Sorensen, Kennedy's oldest policy aide, went on to detail the CIA's disastrous role in cancelling a convoy containing desperately needed ammunition enroute to the embattled exiles, then being pounded on the shores of Cuba by Castro's forces. As Sorensen noted, the CIA's invasion coordinators "called

off the convoy without consulting the President." /28/ While some CIA and Cuban exile defenders have maintained that the fiasco could be traced to an alleged decision by President Kennedy to withdraw "air cover" from the exiles' bombing raids against Castro's air bases, no evidence has ever come to light through the years to support this allegation. Indeed, as Sorensen noted, the CIA's stated "plan was to destroy Castro's air force on the ground before the battle began ... That plan failed." /29/

Sorensen and other observers have further noted that President Kennedy approved, although reluctantly, a limited air cover operation during the final hours of the invasion.... □

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(For the continuation,
please see the book.)